Herodicus in Babylon

Greek Epigram and the Near East

Ben Cartlidge

University of Liverpool

benjamin.cartlidge@liverpool.ac.uk

Abstract: This paper deals with the epigram of Herodicus (*apud* Ath. 5. 222a). First it is examined as a piece of Greek literature - with a history, a number of imitators, a Greek intellectual and scholarly context, and the expressive resources of the Greek language. Several cruces are discussed, but the meaning of the final two words of the poem - θεόπαις Βαβυλών - is of particular importance. The internal syntactic structure of the compound adjective θεό-παις is analysed using comparative evidence from Greek. But the actual comparandum that is argued to be crucial for establishing its meaning is an epithet of Babylon found in Akkadian and Sumerian. The basis for the relevance of this is the existence of Akkadian texts in Greek script (the 'Graeco-Babyloniaca'), which are reviewed in full as part of the evidence for cultural contact in Hellenistic Babylon.

Keywords: Herodicus; Athenaeus; epigram; Babylon; Graeco-Babyloniaca; compounding

The notion that Graeco-Roman - 'classical' - literature benefits from being set into a global context is an old and new insight. It is old, because the links between the 'classical' and the

'Oriental' have long been investigated, whether in the context of Indo-European philology,[1] in editions of texts drawing on Armenian, Syriac, or Arabic translations,[2] or in the tracing of motifs and stories between Graeco-Roman and Semitic, Anatolian, or Egyptian literatures.[3] It is no longer the case that an attempt to trace these links requires special pleading. Nevertheless, the subject retains its novelty because the connections we unearth challenge us to rethink our discipline in ever wider terms. This paper aims to open up a new discussion, by adducing a group of texts perhaps not as well known among classical scholars as they should be (the 'Graeco-Babyloniaca'), and applying them to the interpretation of a Greek epigram.

The only known poetic production of Herodicus of Babylon is an epigram transmitted by Athenaeus. Scholarship has focussed on inferring from the text the cultural and temporal framework of Herodicus, particularly in the context of his opposition to Aristarchus' scholarly approach and endorsement of Crates of Pergamum. What has yet to be exhaustively discussed is the epigram's literary strategy; by contrast, the poem's reception history is much more extensively investigated. This article aims to elucidate this puzzling epigram again, bringing evidence for its interpretation not only from Greek literature, but from the Sumero-Akkadian tradition, and thus disrupting the interpretations of the epigram that focus solely on the scholarly activity of the Hellenic world. Such evidence is of obvious intrinsic interest, since it permits us to glimpse into the workings of intellectual cultural contact. A lesser but still valuable goal, plainly, is the correct understanding of the epigram - in particular, the epigram's final line. This correct interpretation would be possible on the basis of Greek

[1] An often neglected discipline in discussion of this sort; see Watkins 1995 and West 2007 for applications of Indo-European comparative linguistics to the study of ancient literature.

[2] See (to cite two examples from many) Conybeare 1895, Cooper 2017.

[3] West 1997; Metcalf 2015; Currie 2016; Whitmarsh 2018.

evidence alone; but it is confirmed by its links with the wider cultural context of Herodicus.[4] The interpretation of the epigram will first be reviewed, before the focus is narrowed onto the final line. This will then be the cue to expand our analysis to include the Sumero-Akkadian texts relevant for the poem's interpretation.

1 The poem's textual context

The poem is quoted in full by Athenaeus at the end of Book Five of the *Deipnosophists*. The Book is almost entirely in the mouth of the narrator ('Athenaeus'), but he is quoting one of the diners, Masurius, for almost its entire length. Masurius, a jurist, is recounting the history of lavish entertainments, particularly processions and symposia - including the literary symposia of Homer, Plato, Xenophon and Epicurus. In the last pages of the Book, Masurius draws his speech to an end; the narrator then quotes two interventions by the grammarian Ulpian (in direct speech) and the host, Larensius (in indirect speech). We then read as follows (a translation of the epigram follows at the end of the paper):

ὑμεῖς οὖν, ὦ γραμματικοί, κατὰ τὸν Βαβυλώνιον Ἡρόδικον, μηδὲν τῶν τοιούτων ἱστοροῦντες,

φεύγετ', Ἀριστάρχειοι, ἐπ' εὐρέα νῶτα θαλάττης
Ἑλλάδα, τῆς ξουθῆς δειλότεροι κεμάδος,
γωνιοβόμβυκες, μονοσύλλαβοι, οἷσι μέμηλε

[4] On Herodicus in general see Schmidt 1886, Schönemann 1887, Ammendola 1908, Düring 1941, Kassel 1966, 11-12, and now, in the magisterial work on the school of Crates as a whole, Broggiato 2014, 41-106.

τὸ σφὶν καὶ <τὸ> σφῷν καὶ τὸ μὶν ἠδὲ τὸ νίν.

τοῦθ’ ὑμῖν εἴη, δυσπέμφελοι· Ἡροδίκῳ δὲ

Ἕλλὰς ἀεὶ μίμνοι καὶ θεόπαις Βαβυλών.[5]

It is not immediately clear from this whether the narrator is speaking or whether there has been a shift from indirect to direct speech. The latter interpretation is in the end confirmed by the end of the book. The speaker of the epigram is thus Larensius, rather than the narrator.[6]

Eustathius, who quotes the final line at 1077.25, will certainly owe his knowledge of the epigram at least in part to Athenaeus’ quotation; but it cannot be ruled out that the poem had a certain currency in antiquity.[7] Certainly it has been assumed that the poem lies at the root of a tradition of literary polemic in epigram.[8] Epigrams such as Antipater (*AP* 11.20 = 2 *GP*) seem to take Herodicus’ poem as their model.[9] One could perhaps speculate that the vagaries of Athenaeus’ transmission of ancient literature might mean the poem is not

[5] Ath. 5. 222a.

[6] Thus also Burzacchini 2017, 40. The question of the place of the epigram, and of Herodican themes and ideas in general, in Athenaeus, will be discussed in a subsequent article.

[7] For the relationship between Eustathius and Athenaeus see Erbse 1950, 75-92.

[8] Kassel 1974, 8 = 1991, 81; Blomqvist 1988, 50, and *passim*; Fantuzzi & Hunter 2004, 447.

[9] Cairns 2016, 161-73 collects the texts; see also Fantuzzi & Hunter 2004, 444-449; Kassel 1974 = 1991, 79-87 is a famous commentary on the issue as a whole.

complete,[10] but the poem's cohesive structure and the lack of positive evidence that it is from a longer composition are arguments against this.

The phraseology and language of the piece make a studiedly Homeric impression in general.[11] In the case of ἐπ᾽ εὐρέα νῶτα θαλάσσης, widespread in archaic literature more generally, the Homeric flavour of the phrase would be still more underscored if it were certain that the reading were θαλάσσης, as is probable, and as some editors have restored.[12] The Homeric opening prepares us for the central point in the middle of the epigram: the monosyllabic obsessions of the Aristarchean school, characterised using four monosyllabic pronouns characteristic of Homeric, archaic and classical Greek.[13] In line 4, Homeric phraseology yields to Homerist pedantry.

Contrasting with the four monosyllables in the centre of the poem are the four polysyllabic words, two of them compounds, characterising the target of the epigram's satire: Ἀριστάρχειοι, δειλότεροι, γωνιοβόμβυκες, μονοσύλλαβοι. The first, if not entirely self-explanatory, is well-elucidated in earlier literature. Plainly the target of Herodicus'

[10] See e.g. the three quotations of Ar. fr. 520 K.-A., once 'in full' (3.96cd), once as a three-line excerpt (3.110f) and once only as four words (9.374f).

[11] Düring 1941, 7; De Martino 1997, 367; Manetti 2002, 185; Broggiato 2014, 45-6.

[12] See Page 1981, 63 with details of earlier editions of the epigram.

[13] Page 1981, 64 adopts Pierson's addition to line 4, arguing persuasively that the manuscripts' σφωιν, to be in parallel with the other words, must be a monosyllable and must be governed by an article; thus also Kassel 1974, 8 = 1991, 82. Lloyd-Jones & Parsons, 1983 247-8 retain the paradosis without comment. Manetti 2002, 189-90 argues against the correction, on the grounds that Aristarchus did not in fact think that σφῶιν should be monosyllabic, but this is to confuse philological argument with witty polemic.

epigrammatic point are members of the Aristarchean school of criticism and commentary; their flight, first connected by Bergk with the decree of Ptolemy VII Euergetes, is what allows the epigram to be assigned even approximately to an absolute date, c. 146 B.C.[14] The reference to them as δειλότεροι can again be read as an Homeric reference; its pointed implication is that the statement should be read as a form of address, since the adjective in Homer is most frequently used in the vocative or in exclamations.[15]

The third line begins with two resonant compounds hard by each other: γωνιοβόμβυκες, μονοσύλλαβοι. The first, γωνιοβόμβυκες, is usually translated as 'buzzers-in-corners'.[16] The picture of the scholar grumbling in the corner is a trope familiar from Plato, *Gorgias* 485d7.[17] Page points out, however, that the interpretation of βόμβυξ as 'buzzing' would connect it to the verb βομβέω 'buzz' - an unlikely, not to say unparalleled, word-formation pattern in Greek - and that βόμβυξ, by contrast, means either 'silk-worm' or

[14] Bergk 1883, 169 n.1; Düring 1941, 5-6. For full discussion of φεύγετε, see Manetti 2002, 183-4. If Ἑλλάς refers to Greek *culture* rather than Greece as a territory (Manetti 2002, 191-4, Burzacchini 2017, 41), then φεύγετε can mean 'flee from', even retaining the link to the episode of 146 B.C.

[15] 39 tokens in all; vocative at line beginning with the particle ᾶ x 14; exclamatory in apposition to a pronoun (type: ὤ μοι ἐγώ) x 7; otherwise it is formulaic with Πατροκλῆς x 4 and βροτός x 6; other uses x 8.

[16] Olson 2006, 561, following the interpretation of *LSJ*.

[17] See Dodds 1951, 275.

a species of 'pipe'.[18] Referring to the scholars as μονοσύλλαβοι, 'monosyllables', assimilates them to the object of their own scholarship, a trope with a rich afterlife.[19]

This interpretation of the polysyllables in the poem gains more point when we come to the crux of line 5: to read δυσπέμφελοι (with C, the Epitome of Athenaeus) or δυσπέμφελον (with A, the principle Athenaeus MS). The fact that this word was the subject of linguistic speculation in antiquity couples it with another word in the earlier part of the poem, namely κεμάς, a word frequent in grammatical literature, for its declension pattern, and in technical literature, as part of the vocabulary for different ages of deer.[20] The poem's overall attention to balance argues for δυσπέμπελοι, taking a position corresponding to the vocative δειλότεροι in line 2.[21] The word seems in early epic to have had a personal meaning (see Hes. *Op*. 722) as well as a meaning appropriate for the sea and sea-faring (*Il*. 16. 748, Hes. *Th*. 440, *Op*. 618); but in neither case is there any particular clarity about what is meant. The implication of the *Iliad* passage is that it refers to a condition of the sea which would make it unlikely that someone could easily dive for oysters, which fits with the negative attitude towards sea-faring shown by Hesiod. It is perfectly chosen: an Homeric crux; a

[18] Page 1981, 64. On the word-formation of nouns in -υκ-, see Chantraine 1933, 383, who thinks that βόμβυξ is a borrowing. See further Manetti 2002, 185 n.10.

[19] Manetti 2002, 187, Burzacchini 2017, 42; De Martino 1997, 371 traces this trope into the early modern period.

[20] See De Martino 1997, 369-70, Manetti 2002, 189.

[21] The reading is adopted by De Martino 1997, Olson 2006, Lloyd-Jones & Parsons 1983, 247-8, and Page 1981; Düring 1941, 6, Manetti 2002, 191, Broggiato 2014, 59 and Burzacchini 2017, 43 read -ον.

reference to the sea over which the Aristarchans flee; and an epithet for a difficult group of people.

We can now move to the main point of this article, the parsing of the phrase θεόπαις Βαβυλών.

2 Compound syntax and the meaning of θεόπαις

In ancient Greek, there is a rich system of compounding, which I will not summarise in full here; in particular I leave to one side compounds with a verbal constituent.[22] A Greek compound with two nominal stems can be co-ordinative, exocentric, or endocentric. The first type (sometimes referred to as a *dvandva*) is rather rare in classical Greek, in contrast to its productivity in other languages, among Indo-European languages particularly Sanskrit; a good Greek example is πλουθυγίεια (Ar. *Eq*. 1091, *V*. 677, *Av*. 731), 'health-and-wealth'.[23] In endocentric compounds, the second member determines the referent of the overall compound - a *blackbird*, for instance, is a species of bird, further described or specified by the first constituent, *black*; further cases include *bookshelf*, *dinner-jacket*, and *pothole*. In exocentric compounds, the compound refers to something other than the referents of the individual parts of the word; names such as *Bluebeard* and *Bigears* are good examples, as are words like *green-eyed*, *rosy-fingered* and so on. The last named examples, possessive compounds, or *bahuvrihis* as they are sometimes known (green-eyed = *having* green eyes, 'which has green

[22] An extremely full and useful overview is given by Tribulato 2015, 63-131; other surveys in Schwyzer 1939, 425-455; Risch 1974, 181-230.

[23] Thus Dunbar 1995, 731. Schwyzer 1939, 453 points out that the formation is commoner in Modern Greek.

eyes'), are distinguished not only by being compounds, but also by the suffix peculiar to possessive compounds in English, *-ed*; this makes their parsing unambiguous. In the absence of a suffix, however, the parsing of compounds can be problematic. In contrast to *dvandvas,* both exo- and endocentric compounds are highly productive in Greek and richly attested from Mycenaean times to the present day (e.g. endocentric Myc. su-qo-ta /sug^{w}otās/ 'swineherd', MGr. βιβλιοδεσία 'book-binding'; exocentric Myc. qe-to-o-we /k^{w}etrōwes/ 'having four ears [i.e. handles]', MGr. πρασινοχέρης 'having green hands').

Herodicus names himself in the final wish, that both Greece and Babylon remain for him, i.e. are available spheres for his philological activity, unlike the proscribed Aristarcheans.[24] To Babylon, he accords the epithet θεόπαις. Both parts of the compound are unambiguously nominal, which removes the particular problems of verbal compounds. Assuming that the compound is endocentric, the word terms Babylon a 'child of god'; assuming that the compound is exocentric, the word refers to Babylon as 'having a god as a child', in other words as 'creator of god'. This is a sufficient semantic difference to make the question of some interest.

The translations of the poem and the commentary literature offer a range of endorsements of these two positions. The translations by Olson and by Van der Spek adopt the reading 'child of the gods', while Dalley gives a more circumspect rendering 'divine'.[25] Two attempts have been made to link θεόπαις to a rather specific *Sitz im Leben*. The first is to

[24] Bergk 1883, 169 n.1 suggests that Ἑλλάς is a mistake caused by Ἑλλάδα in the second line, suggesting Πέργαμ(α) or Μαλλός as alternatives, the former as the area of Crates' activity, the latter as Herodicus' own residence.

[25] Olson 2006, 561; Van der Spek 2005a, 198 (as Dutch 'godenkind'); Van der Spek 2009, 110.

take ‘child of god’ as a reference to the folk etymology of Babylon as Akkadian *Bāb-ili*, ‘gate of god’.[26] The second is that Babylon, having been refounded as a Greek *polis* by Seleucus I, was the ‘child of a god’, i.e. of a Seleucid king.[27] The latter could only be proved if linked in more detail to the specifics of Seleucid ruler cult in Babylon, which Manetti does not do; such an interpretation would face the problem of a lack of Greek temple construction in Babylon.[28] The former seems unattractive, or at least strange; had Herodicus intended this kind of *interpretatio Graeca*, why did he not choose a form that in fact meant ‘gate of god’? In any case, neither Manetti nor De Martino begin by analysing the occurrences of the compound θεόπαις in order to establish the most natural meaning of the compound; this paper therefore aims at a comprehensive survey before turning to link the compound’s meaning to a wider cultural perspective.

In Christian literature, the compound is used three times to describe Jesus.[29] Elsewhere, however, the more common application of the word is to Mary, Jesus’ mother. As

[26] De Martino 1997, 373-4, Burzacchini 2017, 43-4; cf. Edzard 2004, 121.

[27] Enrico Livrea, reported in Manetti 2002, 197. Page 1981, 64 already suggested a link to ‘some versions’ of the foundation of Babylon, but is vague on detail. Van der Spek 2009, 110 terms the introduction of ruler cult at this period in Babylon ‘questionable’. Even if Herodicus is writing under Antiochus IV Epiphanes, whose coins are much the most obvious of the Seleucids’ issues to use cultic imagery, this would hardly make Babylon a ‘child of a god’, and this places the problem into the difficult territory of early Seleucid ruler cult; see Erickson 2018.

[28] Van der Spek 2009, 110;

[29] Eusebius, *h.e.* 10.4.56; Epiphanius, *Homilia in divini corporis sepulturam*, 43.441.28; Joannes XI Bekkos, *Epigraphe* 2, 636: Ἰησοῦς ὁ θεόπαις.

a particularly striking illustration, I quote John Damascenus' version of the Annunciation (*Oratio prima in dormitionem sanctae Dei genitricis Mariae* 7):

ἀπεστάλη ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ ἄγγελος Γαβριὴλ πρὸς ταύτην τὴν ὄντως θεόπαιδα καί φησι πρὸς αὐτὴν· Χαῖρε, κεχαριτωμένη, ὁ κύριος μετά σου.

'The angel Gabriel was sent by God to her who is indeed the mother of God, and he said to her, "Greetings, gracious one, the Lord is with you.'

This is no fluke of eighth-century Byzantine scholarship. Earlier Christian writers also adopted the term.[30] Quite plainly, the compound in this case must be exocentric. This is the usage also in the only inscriptional attestation I have been able to trace:

☩ [ ] ἐκ Μαρίης θεοπαῖδος[31] ἀπηνέος [ ] ¦ [ ] θεοδέγμονα κῆπον vacat ¦ [- ἀ]νίθηκα τὸ δῶμα ☩ (6th c., Aphrodisias 709 McCabe = ala2004 100 Roueché)

This fragmentary epigram is of great interest also for its intertextuality with Nonnus. It is supposed to be Nonnus who first applied the word θεόπαις to Mary (*Io. Par.* 19.138, Χρίστος ἴδεν θεόπαιδα, i.e. Jesus saw Mary). In Nonnus' *Dionysiaca*, similarly, θεόπαις

[30] Select references: Sophr. H. *carm.* 1.7, 11.82, 20.65; Jo. D., *Oratio in occursum Domini,* 10.5; Euthymius, *Laudatio altera in conceptionem sanctae Annae*, 443.20, 453.20; *Encomium in venerationem zonae Deiparae*, 512.18, 513.15.

[31] Accented thus in the edition, but probably θεόπαιδος is meant. I do not find evidence for †θεοπαίς, and nor do I think any semantic distinction between the two accentuations is expected.

γενέθλη refers to Dionysus' birth from Semele, another mother of a god. This latter is slightly complex and deserves our attention a shade longer. The passage reads as follows:

οὐδὲ λάθες, Διόνυσε, δολορραφέος φθόνον Ἥρης·
ἀλλὰ πάλιν κοτέουσα τεῇ θεόπαιδι γενέθλῃ
ἄγγελον Ἶριν ἔπεμπε δυσάγγελον, ὄφρα σε θέλξῃ
κλεψινόῳ κεράσασα δόλῳ ψευδήμονα πειθώ· 185
δῶκε δέ οἱ βουπλῆγα θεημάχον, ὄφρα κομίσσῃ
Ἀρραβίης μεδέοντι, Δρυαντιάδῃ Λυκοόργῳ.[32]

'Nor, Dionysus, did you escape the attention of the jealousy of Hera, the weaver of deceit. But angry at your *theopais* birth she sent Iris the messenger, bringer of ill news, to enchant you by mixing false persuasion with deceitful craft. And she gave her a god-fighting cow-prod, to bring to the lord of Arabia, Lycurgus son of Dryas.'

Plainly Dionysus is a child who is a god; yet he is also the child of a god (Zeus). The question is which part of the equation has made Hera angry. It might be that Hera is angry with Zeus for fathering a son on Semele, or with Semele, because she will give birth to a divine child. Given that the action she is about to take is directed against Semele, however, it seems more likely that it is to Semele's transgression that the poet wishes to direct our interest. The compound is therefore more naturally a reference to Dionysus being born *as* a god (from a mortal), not to Dionysus' status as the son *of* a god; Hera is 'angry at your birth as the child of a god' when she sends Iris.

[32] *D.* 20. 182-7.

Moving to epigram, apart from the example under discussion here, we read the form applied by Meleager to another city, Tyre:

ἀτρέμας, ὦ ξένε, βαῖνε· παρ᾽ εὐσεβέσιν γὰρ ὁ πρέσβυς
εὕδει κοιμηθεὶς ὕπνον ὀφειλόμενον
Εὐκράτεω Μελέαγρος, ὁ τὸν γλυκύδακρυν Ἔρωτα
καὶ Μούσας ἱλαραῖς συστολίσας χάρισιν·
ὃν θεόπαις ἤνδρωσε Τύρος Γαδάρων θ᾽ ἱερὰ χθών, 5
Κῶς δ᾽ ἐρατὴ Μερόπων πρέσβυν ἐγηροτρόφει.
ἀλλ᾽ εἰ μὲν Σύρος ἐσσί, σαλάμ· εἰ δ᾽ οὖν σύ γε Φοῖνιξ,
ναίδιος· εἰ δ᾽ Ἕλλην, χαῖρε· τὸ δ᾽ αὐτὸ φράσον.[33]

‘Go gently, stranger; for the old man slumbers with the pious in the repose of rest he has earned, Meleager, son of Eukrates, who wove sweet-teared Love and the Muses with cheerful joys. Him did *theopais* Tyre raise, and the sacred earth of Gadara, and lovely Cos nourished him as a councillor of Meropes in his old age. If you are a Syrian, *salaam*; if you are a Phoenician, *naidios*; if you are a Greek, *khaire*; say the same yourself.’

This sepulchral poem, addressed by a gravestone to a passing stranger, summarises the career of the author, Meleager, combining references to the Phoenician and Syrian contexts of the poet as much as to his Greek cultural capital - most strikingly by giving us the only example of the greeting *salaam* in extant Greek literature, a point taken up again later in this paper. The commentary of Gow & Page on line 5 of this epigram takes the compound to

[33] *AP* 7.419 = 4000-4006 *HE*.

be an exocentric, possessive compound; Tyre is the city 'whose boys are gods'.[34] Page's later commentary contrasts the use of θεόπαις for Tyre by Meleager and the use for Babylon by Herodicus: the sense 'of god-like boys' is said to be more appropriate for the former than the latter.[35] The reason for this seems to be that Meleager comments on the beauty of boys in Tyre in another epigram:

πάγκαρπόν σοι Κύπρι καθήρμοσε χειρὶ τρυγήσας
παίδων ἄνθος Ἔρως ψυχαπάτην στέφανον.
ἐν μὲν γὰρ κρίνον ἡδὺ κατέπλεξεν Διόδωρον,
ἐν δ᾽ Ἀσκληπιάδην τὸ γλυκὺ λευκόϊον.
ναὶ μὴν Ἡράκλειτον ἐνέπλεκεν ὡς ἀπ᾽ ἀκάνθης
θεὶς ῥόδον, οἰνάνθη δ᾽ ὥς τις ἔθαλλε Δίων.
χρυσανθῆ δὲ κόμαισι κρόκον Θήρωνα συνῆψεν,
ἐν δ᾽ ἔβαλ᾽ ἑρπύλλου κλωνίον Οὐλιάδην.
ἁβροκόμην δὲ Μυΐσκον ἀειθαλὲς ἔρνος ἐλαίης,
ἱμερτοὺς ἀρετῆς κλῶνας, ἀπεδρέπετο.
ὀλβίστη νήσων ἱερὰ Τύρος, ἣ τὸ μυρόπνουν
ἄλσος ἔχει παίδων Κύπριδος ἀνθοφόρων.[36]

'For you, Cypris, Eros plucked with his hand at harvest the fruitful flower of boys as a soul-bewitching crown. For he wove the sweet lily Diodorus into it, and Asclepiades the pretty wallflower. Yes, he wove Heraclitus in, like setting a rose from its thorn, and Dio bloomed

[34] *HE*, vol. 2, 608.

[35] Page 1981, 64.

[36] *AP* 12.256 = 4408-4419 *HE*.

like a vine. He bound in Theron, a golden crocus from his hair, and he added Uliades, the twig of thyme. He harvested Myiscus with his beautiful locks, an evergreen branch of olive, the lovely branches of courage. Holy Tyre is the most blessed of islands! It contains the myrrh-breathed grove of the boys who bear the flowers of Cypris.'

This poem has strong intertextual links with 7.419: the language of weaving (καθήρμοσε, κατέπλεξε, ἐνέπλεκε, συνῆψεν, ἐν δ' ἔβαλε, cf. συστολίσας in 7.419.4) creates a garland out of the seven named boys, each compared to an individual flower, just as *AP* 4.1 (= 3924-3983 *HE*), Meleager's famous programmatic preface to his epigram collection, links the authors of the anthology with flowers. Thus 12.256 constructs the same connection as 7.419.3-4 between erotic beauty and poetry. The seven boys are both constituents of the garland (in the body of the poem) and are themselves flower-bearers (in the final couplet), the final line mirroring the second line, and underscoring once again the amatory purpose of the poem. The end of the poem also reveals the point of the epigram: the beauty of the boys is a component in the praise of Tyre ('happiest of islands'). Since Meleager praises the beauty of the boys of Tyre in this piece, to refer to Tyre in 7.419.5 as 'whose children are gods' makes excellent sense; indeed, six of the seven boys of 12.256 are recurring figures in Meleager's poems (Diodorus, Dion, Uliades, Theron: *AP* 12.95 = 4398-4407 *HE*; Heraclitus: *AP* 12.63, 72 = 4484-4495 *HE*; Theron: *AP* 12. 41, 60; Myiscus: *AP* 12.23, 59, 65, 70, 101, 106, 110, 144, 154, 159, 167 = 4524-4571 *HE*). The historicity of these boys, assumed by Gow & Page, is held as a proof of an exocentric reading of the epithet θεόπαις applied to Tyre, 'having boys who were gods'. Although this is unquestionably a possible reading, it must be emphasised that it is not the only way the exocentric compound can be interpreted. Page will argue, however, that Herodicus must use the word with endocentric meaning, because the

meaning ‘of god-like boys’ is (supposedly) inapplicable to Babylon. We will return to that argument later in the paper.

In another epigram, however, Meleager uses the word a different sense:

εἰκόνα μὲν Παρίην ζωογλύφος ἄνυσ᾽ Ἔρωτος
Πραξιτέλης Κύπριδος παῖδα τυπωσάμενος·
νῦν δ᾽ ὁ θεῶν κάλλιστος Ἔρως ἔμψυχον ἄγαλμα
αὐτὸν ἀπεικονίσας ἔπλασε Πραξιτέλην,
ὄφρ᾽ ὁ μὲν ἐν θνατοῖς ὁ δ᾽ ἐν αἰθέρι φίλτρα βραβεύῃ, 5
γῆς θ᾽ ἅμα καὶ μακάρων σκηπτροφορῶσι Πόθων.
ὀλβίστη Μερόπων ἱερὰ πόλις ἃ θεόπαιδα
καινὸν Ἔρωτα νέων θρέψεν ὑφαγεμόνα.[37]

‘Praxiteles the sculptor made an image of Eros from Parian marble, moulding the son of Cypris. And now Eros, most handsome of the gods, has made Praxiteles a living sculpture in imitation of himself, so that each might serve the drink, one among mortals, the other in heaven, and rule the Desires at once on earth and among the gods. Most blessed is the holy city of the Meropes which brought up the new *theopaida* Eros, the leader of young men.’

Praxiteles the sculptor, who produced a statue of Eros, has been made, by Eros, into a living representation of the same deity; as a result, he will perform the same functions among men as Eros does among the gods. The poem ends with a *makarismos* rather similar to the end of 12.265, praising θεόπαις Ἔρως. The interpretation of the epithet is rather more

[37] *AP* 12.56 = 4572-4579 *HE*.

complex in this case. The immediately obvious interpretation of the epithet, in view of Κύπριδος παῖδα (2), is 'son of a god', the straightforward designation of Eros' paternity. Yet the Eros in question is the καινὸς Ἔρως (6) - Praxiteles, whom Eros has created in his own image; Praxiteles is thus 'child of a god', in the sense 'creation of a god'. Completing the circle, since the statue of Eros (1) is in turn Praxiteles' handiwork, the statue of Eros is equally 'creation of a god'. This case then can bear both endocentric and exocentric readings - indeed the poem seems to play on both readings being accessible.

The two epigrams *AP* 7.419 and 12.56 taken together show the expressive possibilities of ancient Greek compounds. Meleager is perfectly capable of using the word in different senses, even in epigrams of closely related thought - different interpretations of the epithet might suggest themselves to different readers of a single epigram. It follows that both are entirely possible senses of the word for Herodicus to use, as Page pointed out in his commentary on Herodicus, glossing them 'of god-like boys' and 'having a divine founder' respectively.[38]

Elsewhere in Greek literature, the adjective is applied to a fish - the sea bass - by Archestratus (fr. 46.2 Olsen-Sens):

κεστρέα τὸν κεφαλὸν καὶ τὸν θεόπαιδα λάβρακα

'the *kephalos* variety of grey-mullet and the divinely-sired sea bass'[39]

[38] Page 1981, 64.

[39] Translation of Olson & Sens 2000, 180, reproduced in Olson's Loeb edition of Athenaeus, 2008, 454 (Ath. 7. 311a).

This is the earliest attestation of the adjective, and brings our survey of the forms to a close. It is curious that the earliest attestation is also the least clear in terms of meaning. According to Olson and Sens, 'the idea is presumably that the λάβραξ is metaphorically "divine" (i.e. extremely delicious) food'.[40] The idea that θεόπαις has a much more general meaning – simply 'divine' rather than any further connotation of 'child' (or 'parent') – is a superficially attractive idea, and would go a long way to solving many of the problems sketched in this paper. 'Divine' without further qualification is even the translation some prefer in the context of Herodicus' epigram.[41] However, as I will go on to argue for Herodicus, so here too another possibility lies open to us. The meaning in Archestratus may be that the fish has 'gods for children' – i.e. the edible roe of the sea bass.[42] An alternative reading could take this to mean 'small fish', i.e. small-fry, praised elsewhere in the poem (see Archestratus fr. 11 Olson-Sens). On this – admittedly tentative – reading, the compound could be exocentric.

The survey of forms thus suggests that the exocentric reading of the compound is almost always at least possible and is sometimes mandatory. The unmarked reading of Herodicus, given the lack of further context (beyond the *Sitz im Leben* we are attempting to reconstruct), therefore should start from the exocentric interpretation of the compound. The objection may however be faced that to interpret a word θεόπαις as 'mother of gods' is simply perverse, and therefore requires some sort of special explanation - a context - to make this reading accessible to reader-listeners. Herodicus could surely have written an epigram in

[40] Olson & Sens 2000, 182.

[41] Thus Dalley 1998, 48.

[42] Fish roe is first attested as a foodstuff, requiring a salting, cooking, and pickling procedure, in Diphilus Siphnius (*apud* Ath. 3. 121c); for further references see Dalby 2003, 169. Admittedly, however, I find no direct evidence for the roe of the sea bass.

which Babylon was referred to as θεομήτωρ, had he wished this to be his meaning (this is exactly the argument by which the proposal of De Martino was rejected above). To add weight to our hypothesis, therefore, we examine next the other compounds with –παις as second member, and a nominal first member, to see if they bear an exocentric interpretation in general. One requires somewhat special treatment, namely βού-παις (Eupolis fr. 437, Ar. *V*. 1206). This compound uses the first member, βου-, to mean 'big' and hence 'full-grown' (cf. βούλιμος Alexis fr.140.17 with K.-A. *ad loc.*; βουκόρυζα, βουκορυζᾶν Phot. β 224 = Sud. β 422 = Men. fr. 530).[43] It is therefore a determinative compound - the first member of the compound more or less demands that it is - but the highly metaphorical nature of the formation means that we should be wary of generalising any rules from it.

A rather doubtful case is ἀνδρό-παις, glossed as 'man-boy', 'a boy with a man's mind' at A. *Th*. 533. The whole phrase ἀνδρόπαις ἀνήρ adds further uncertainty; Aeschylus is known to play with compounds. Hutchinson notes that the phrase ἀνδρόπαις ἀνήρ is, however it is parsed, a piece of bold writing on the part of Aeschylus.[44] Since Parthenopaeus (as the name suggests) is a young man only just getting down on his face, ἀνδρόπαις ἀνήρ seems unlikely to mean 'a man and a sower of men' or the like. Perhaps this is a further case of *dvandva*, and we should interpret it as 'a man who is man and boy together'; Aeschylus would then be stressing Parthenopaeus' liminality.[45]

Similar considerations apply to the form ὀρνιθόπαις, an epithet of a Siren in Lycophron (*Alexandra* 731), and thus describing a creature of equal liminality to

[43] Dover 1993, 308 (on Ar. *Ra*. 924); Biles & Olson 2016, 435.

[44] Hutchinson 1985, 127.

[45] For the history of Parthenopaeus' sexuality and ambiguous stage of life, see Sergi 1989, 58 n.16.

Parthenopaeus. But in this case the solution is perhaps rather more clear-cut. The most recent published translation, which does not make any linguistic remarks on the form, translates the word as 'bird child', i.e. taking an endocentric reading.[46] Since a Siren is a bird-like creature,[47] it might not be unreasonable to see this word as another *dvandva*: the Siren is 'a child and a bird.' However, Hornblower's commentary mentions a myth adduced by Holzinger according to which the children of the Siren were turned into birds.[48] If that is true, then neither the endocentric reading adopted by Hornblower's translation, nor the more ambitious *dvandva* suggested here need be correct; rather the Siren is simply 'mother of birds', 'whose children are birds', and the form joins our dossier of exocentric compounds in -παις. Indeed, Holzinger is absolutely explicit on this point: 'man müsste denn die Tereina insofern ὀρνιθόπαις genannt haben dürfen, als ihre Enkelin und deren Kinder in Vögel verwandelt wurden', and refers further to Lyc. 851, where Helen is described as θηλύπαις.[49] What is interesting here is that this compound, in turn, has had both *dvandva* and exocentric readings applied to it. The standard interpretation argues that Helen only gave birth to daughters. But an alternative reading, that Helen was 'a girl used as a boy', i.e. as a passive partner in anal sex, has been suggested.[50] Helen would then be a 'girl and a boy', and the compound a *dvandva*. How likely is this? The interpretation of the word as an exocentric compound is much more natural.

[46] Hornblower 2015, 297.

[47] See Lyc. 653 with Hornblower 2015, 276 (*ad loc*.).

[48] Hornblower 2015, 297; Holzinger 1895, 279.

[49] Holzinger 1895, 279 .

[50] See Hornblower 2015, 327, who endorses the traditional interpretation in his translation; for the alternative reading, suggested by L. Holford-Strevens, see Lightfoot 1999, 546 n. 402.

In an epigram of Theocritus, of which I give the central section here, we find the form βοτρυόπαις:

σακὸς δ᾽ εὐίερος περιδέδρομεν, ἀέναον δέ
ῥεῖθρον ἀπὸ σπιλάδων πάντοσε τηλεθάει
δάφναις καὶ μύτροισι καὶ εὐώδει κυπαρίσσῳ,
ἔνθα πέριξ κέχυται βοτρυόπαις ἕλικι
ἄμπελος κτλ.[51]

'The sacred grove surrounds, and the ever-flowing stream springs from the rocks on all sides for the laurels, the myrtles and the fragrant cypresses, where the vine, *botryopais*, pours around in a curl'

I have left βοτρυόπαις untranslated at this stage, so as not to prejudge the problem. In their commentary, Gow & Page do not parse the compound formally; rather they refer to epigrams by Moero and pseudo-Simonides which describe the vine in general terms as a 'mother'.[52] The implication, then, is that they take the compound βοτρυό-παις as an exocentric compound meaning 'whose children are grapes', i.e. 'mother of grapes'. Is a reading 'born of grapes' - i.e. grown from the seeds of grapes - a possible alternative? Certainly it is the accepted meaning of the word in a later epigram:

λάθριον ἑρπηστὴν σκολιὸν πόδα, κισσέ, χορεύσας
ἄγχεις τὴν Βρομίου βοτρυόπαιδα χάριν·

[51] Theocritus, *AP* 9.437.5-9 = 3478-3482 *HE*.

[52] Moero, *AP* 6.119.3 = 2677 *HE*; pseudo-Simonides, *AP* 7.24.1 = 3314 *HE*.

δεσμεῖς δ᾽ οὐχ ἡμᾶς, ὀλέκεις δὲ σέ· τίς γὰρ ἕλοιτ᾽ ἄν

κισσὸν ἐπὶ κροτάφοις, μὴ κεράσας Βρόμιον;[53]

'Ivy, you dance creeping secretly on a crooked foot and strangle the *botryopais* joy of Bromius. But you do not bind me, rather you destroy yourself. For who would put ivy on his temples if he wasn't mixing wine?'

Gow and Page's note on this passage refers to their note on the Theocritus epigram quoted above; there, they explicitly endorse the interpretation 'grape-begotten'. Certainly, the 'joy of Bromius' surely makes us think of wine; and 'grape-begotten' is then a perfectly apt description. But in fact it is less straightforward than this; for what the ivy of the poem is strangling is not 'wine', but the 'vine', and for the plant itself, it is more natural to think of it as 'having grapes as offspring'. Indeed, that is a particularly apt view if the plant is to be 'the joy of Bromius'. As a result, the exocentric reading is in fact preferable for both poems.[54]

An almost parallel case is the word ἀρσενόπαις, which in *AP* 5.54.6 = 1502 *HE* (an epigram by Dioscorides) is used of Cypris. The poem advises an amorous husband to practice anal instead of vaginal sex during his wife's pregnancy (the commentary of Gow & Page is of course an exercise in studied primness). Cypris is described as ἀρσενόπαις, which can only

[53] Philip, *AP* 11.33 = 3027-3032 *GP*.

[54] The translation of Beckby 1966, 273 and 561, renders the adjective rather loosely, but he does take *AP* 11. 33 to mean 'des Dionysos Weinstock' – thus the vine, rather than wine – and sees the vine of *AP* 9. 437 as 'von Trauben durchsetzt' – producing grapes, rather than produced from grapes. The difficulties of the transmission of *AP* 9. 437 (the poem has ended up in three parts in different parts of the MSS, see *HE*, vol.2, 526; Beckby 1966, 272) have no bearing on our question here.

be a reference to the fact she is mother of Eros; her motherhood is stressed because the advice is being given to the husband of a mother-to-be, and it is Cypris who is taken as a point of comparison, because the husband still very much desires his wife. The interpretation of the same word in *AP* 16.134.4 = 4713 *HE* is more difficult. The phrase ἀρσενόπαις γόνος refers to the male children of Niobe (balanced in the following couplet by the female children, all of whom are to be destroyed at the hands of Apollo and Artemis). Probably it is best to take ἀρσενόπαις as 'of male children'; this reading in fact removes the adjective from the examples we have, since the function of ἄρσην in this compound would have to be adjectival.[55]

This survey of formations (in alphabetical order: ἀδελφό-, ἀνδρό-, ἀρσενό-, βοτρυό-, θηλύ-) parallel to θεόπαις does not show that the exocentric reading is the only possible one for this adjective. Furthermore, there are a few more forms that are certainly endocentric, that is, they refer to an entity that is a 'child'; and even though these endocentric forms make up two discrete groups - divine epithets[56] and names for family members[57] -, neither of which is obvious in the case of θεόπαις Βαβυλών, these are still important bits of counterevidence.

[55] In the traditional classification of compounds taken from Sanskrit grammarians, this would be a *karmadharaya* or descriptive compound - English *blackbird* rather than *dinner-jacket* (a *tatpuruṣa*).

[56] Divine epithets: πυρίπαις (Oppian, *Cyn*. 4.288) 'child of fire', epithet of Dionysus; οὐρανόπαις 'child of heaven/Uranus', of Hestia, *Orph. hymni* 27.13 Quandt, of Themis, 79.1 Quandt; Ταρταρόπαις 'child of Tartarus', of Hecate, Orph. *Arg*. 977 Quandt; θαλασσόπαις, Lyc. 892, of Triton.

[57] Members of the family: ἀδελφόπαις (D. H. 4.64) 'brother's or sister's child'; παιδόπαις (*IG* 12.2.168) 'grandchild'; θυγατρόπαις (Nicet. Chon. *Hist*. 535) 'daughter's child'.

The data do at least prove that an exocentric interpretation of the form in Herodicus is possible. But even this, from the point of view of Greek philology, is little gain. Indeed, one conclusion from this part of the paper might be that the form simply is systematically ambiguous, rather as some of the poems discussed above might be (particularly in the thickly textured Alexandrian poems that I have cited). The second half of this paper will therefore present evidence from another quarter that points to the likelihood of an exocentric reading.

3 Babylon's role in the poem

Yet at this point a further consideration might strike us. We have treated this poem thus far entirely in the context of Greek intellectual discourse, particularly with reference to scholarly polemics, the criticism of Homer, and political changes in the Hellenistic period. What is missing is Babylon. Even the correct parsing of the compound on grammatical grounds will come to nothing without elucidating what a poet might have wanted to say about Babylon. It was precisely this concern which led Page away from one interpretation of the epithet to another: what was good for the Tyrian goose was not appropriate for the Babylonian gander.[58] It would be interesting to know what Page's grounds were for making this assertion. If the only reason is the absence, in available records, of a Babylonian counterpart to *AP* 12.256, then this can only be a weak justification: an argument from silence, in fact. The capacity of epigram to adapt, reuse and cannibalise tropes and phraseology must give us pause: the existence of poems praising the boys of Babylon cannot be ruled out simply on the absence of evidence; hundreds if not thousands of inscriptional epigrams are not yet published or analysed. In that case, can the same (exocentric)

[58] Page 1981, 64.

interpretation of θεόπαις that applied to Tyre yet be valid for Babylon, and is anything known about Babylon that could settle the issue?

The expansion of the Greek world in the Hellenistic and Roman periods brought epigram into contact with Near-Eastern cultures - we have already seen above two approaches to our epigram that take account of this interaction, even if we reject their conclusions - but these influences are yet to be the subject of a concerted study. Fruitful engagements between epigram and curse inscriptions related the prohibitions on vandalism in epigram to inscriptional practices spread throughout the Near East.[59] The monumental edition of epigrams from the Greek East under the direction of Merkelbach and Stauber would plainly offer more material for such investigations, and should be systematically searched by those with the requisite background in Near-Eastern literatures.[60] Ranging still further afield, the consolation motifs of funerary epigram have been ammunition in the battle over Buddhist presences in classical literature.[61] This paper has already had cause to discuss the funerary epigram of Meleager (*AP* 7. 419 = 4000-4007 *HE*), with the only use of the word *salaam* (σαλάμ) in ancient Greek literature.[62] Meleager thus situates this funerary pseudo-inscription firmly within the multilingual world of the eastern Mediterranean. An epigram of Crinagoras (*AP* 9.284 = 1981-1986 *GP*) may exploit awareness of the Near East, if an emendation Γάζης in the margins of the manuscripts is truly to be accepted in place of nonsensical γαίη.[63] The

[59] For the Greek material, Strubbe 1997; application to the epigrams of Gregory of Nazianzus and on Anatolian comparanda, Floridi 2013.

[60] Merkelbach & Stauber 1998-2004.

[61] Derret 2002.

[62] See Luz 1988.

[63] Apostol 2016.

emendation adopted by the most recent commentary on the poem, κΑἰγυπτίης, looks instead to Egypt, but still underscores the view to the East adopted by Greek epigram.[64] A similar *interpretatio Aegyptiaca* underlies Vanhaegendoren's reading of *AP* 11.15 (Ammianus), who suggests that an ancient etymology of the name Ὡριγένης as 'Horussohn' may partially explain the magical protection the speaker in the epigram hopes to gain by changing his name.[65] Plainly this kind of allusion-tracing has far from exhausted the possibilities presented by the huge corpus of ancient epigram.

We might begin by thinking about the periods in which we have evidence for a lively Greek cultural life in Babylon.[66] The Greek inscriptional evidence from Babylon is not enormous;[67] into the bargain it seems to be grouped into two distinct chronological phases. The first dates from the foundation of the Greek community under Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 B.C.),[68] the second is related to the rebuilding of the theatre in the second century A.D.[69] The dating of the epigram of Herodicus to 146 B.C. thus sets it into a context when Hellenism is flourishing in Babylon, shortly before the Parthian period (the Arsacid conquest

[64] Ypsilanti 2018, 371-3

[65] Vanhaegendoren 2006/2007.

[66] The debate on this question has generated a huge literature: see Oelsner 1986; Van der Spek 1986, 55-68; Dalley 1998, 45-49; Boiy 2004; van der Spek 2005a; Clancier 2017.

[67] See Canali de Rossi 2004, Merkelbach & Stauber 2005.

[68] On the date of the foundation of the *polis* at Babylon see, for the foundation by Antiochus IV, Van der Spek 1986, 55-68, Van der Spek 2005b, 296; an earlier date has been suggested by Boiy 2004, 208 and Clancier 2017, 73.

[69] For the theatre at Babylon cf. Van der Spek 2001 (based on a suggestion by John Ma); further Van der Spek 2009, 110.

in 141 B.C.). References to *politai* (*pu-li-te-e*, or with a redetermined plural *pu-li-ta-nu*) in the Babylonian astronomical diaries show something of the distinction between Greek and Babylonian culture.[70] This has been used to support the notion that Greeks represented practically an independent political settlement, a city-within-a-city, or even an 'apartheid',[71] matching the idea that Greeks were indifferent or even hostile to foreign cultures.[72] The foundation of this Greek community in Babylon would date to the time that Antiochus IV was named the κτιστής of Babylon (*OGIS* 253, 166 B.C.).[73]

Even if this is true on a 'global' scale, however, it seems *prima facie* unlikely that *no* Greek-speaker would *ever* have interested themselves *at all* in indigenous culture. Even if that interest was neither sympathetic nor based on accurate observation, given the existence of any kind of scholarly life in Babylon, these intellectuals may be expected to have had some questions for local informants about the city they had occupied. Plainly these would have been very infrequent and unsystematic points of contact, but to suggest they never happened at all is inherently implausible.[74]

[70] For the question of how 'Greek' the *pu-li-te-e* were, see Van der Spek 2005b, 395-6 and 400-1, Van der Spek 2009, 107, Clancier 2017, 65-6.

[71] Van der Spek 2001, 453, Boiy 2004, 109, Oelsner 2007, 219; challenged by Clancier 2017, 64-71.

[72] Momigliano 1975, Green 1995, 312-35 on what he terms 'Greek enclave culture' (330).

[73] Bunge 1976, Van der Spek 2009, 107 with references to his earlier work on the subject.

[74] As even Green 1995, 324 acknowledges, with reference to the Middle East. Scholz 2008, 460-1 lists named Greek intellectuals associated with Babylon, including Herodicus. A full re-evaluation of this whole question can be found in Stevens 2019.

In any event, there are indications that individuals did involve themselves in the life of the rest of the city beyond their own communities. One of the most extensively investigated signs of contact between Greeks and Babylonians in our record is the use of double names.[75] Sherwin-White showed over thirty years ago that in some examples of the use of double names the naming formula is a translation from Akkadian, rather than the usual Greek formula.[76] Another important figure is Berossos, the Babylonian author of a Greek-language Βαβυλωνιακά.[77] The concept of 'étanchéité', the 'impermeability' of Greek communities, has been challenged.[78]

A second piece of evidence for cultural contact in Hellenistic Babylon, though of doubtful interpretation, are the so-called Graeco-Babyloniaca. These are a collection of sixteen Babylonian texts written in Greek characters.[79] It would be wrong to characterise these as anything other than unusual; nevertheless they attest that texts of this sort were in circulation. Questions about their date, production, and intended readership are all open, and answers of different sorts have been advanced over the hundred or so years that these texts have been known. Geller has hypothesised that the Graeco-Babyloniaca are extremely late,

[75] See Boiy 2005 and especially the comprehensive survey by Monerie 2014.

[76] Sherwin-White 1983.

[77] See the survey in Haubold et al. 2013, and Stevens 2019, 95-120.

[78] The word is Préaux's; see the discussion in Shipley 2000, 323.

[79] For editions of the texts see Geller 1997, with the important corrections by Westenholz 2007. Important further editions and discussions are Sollberger 1962, Black & Sherwin-White 1984, Oelsner 1986, 239-244, Knudsen 1989-90, Knudsen 1990, Maul 1991, Maul 1995, Scholz 2008, Clancier 2009, 248-255, Clancier 2011. Stevens 2019, 120-143 is a superb recent survey.

indeed that they represent the final stage of cuneiform culture.[80] This is partly based on palaeographical considerations, in particular the comparison of the Greek script with Ptolemaic papyri, which led to a very late date for these documents in the second century A.D.[81] The comparison, however, is inexact: ductus on clay and on papyrus is different, and in any case scribal practice will vary between Egypt and Babylonia.[82] It is also not clear that the Graeco-Babyloniaca are indicative of decline in cuneiform knowledge; Geller points out that the first century B.C. saw a renewed flourishing of cuneiform culture.[83] Since production of cuneiform texts was, in the Hellenistic period, confined to the temple schools of Babylon, these texts too must have been produced in that context. For whom were these transliterations into Greek characters - the first transliterations, it is pointed out, of a cuneiform text into a European alphabet - made? There are three main theories about this, all of which set the tablets into a didactic context: either they were for people already literate in Greek who learned Akkadian,[84] or for Babylonians learning Greek (or Greek script);[85] a third possibility

[80] See Geller 1997 for the most important statement of this view.

[81] Geller 1983 cites the views on the palaeography of the Greek texts of Maehler and Cockle.

[82] Westenholz 2007, 274.

[83] Geller 1997, 45.

[84] Thus Sollberger 1962, 63, Gesche 2000, 185, Scholz 2008 and (with reservations) Dalley 1998, 40-1, who think the original users were Greeks, and Westenholz 2007, Clancier 2009, 250-1, who think the original users were Greek-literate Babylonians studying Akkadian in transliteration. An important feature of these texts in favour of this position is that they turn on their vertical axis, unlike normal cuneiform tablets which turn on the horizontal axis.

[85] Thus Knudsen 1990, 150-1; Oelsner 2002, 191-2 n. 43.

is that they reflect the transfer of Akkadian onto leather documents, for which an alphabet had to be used.[86]

The precise purpose of these documents is less important, for our purposes, than the fact that they indicate some kind of literate cultural contact between writers of Greek and writers of cuneiform. Even if these tablets are from a didactic tradition, the fact that they possess a standard format seems to indicate that they are not 'groping experiments with a new technique': they rest rather on a tradition that had already matured.[87] In any case, these written documents can only represent a single 'frozen' moment within a much more wide-ranging and lively oral contact between Greeks and Babylonians - not only 'the last wedge' (Geller 1997), but the thin end of the wedge, as it were. A further indication of this is the wide range of genres that the attested texts contain, including scholarly (lexicographical) and literary texts, albeit representing works that fit within the normal scholarly reading of a scribe after he completed his basic training.[88] By a striking coincidence, one of these genres is of particular relevance for the Herodicus epigram, namely the copy of the topographical text known as *TINTIR=Babylon*.[89]

These texts provide catalogues of epithets by which the city of Babylon is known. The structure is that a Sumerian entry is given an Akkadian gloss in each case. The question then arises whether any of these epithets provide a model for the word θεόπαις, and as it happens, one of them certainly does. The relevant entry is *TINTIR=Babylon* text I, 30:

[86] Thus Geller 1997, 48-49, Geller 1999, 397; see the assessment in Clancier 2011, 769.

[87] Westenholz 2007, 274.

[88] See already Sollberger 1962, 63, and the convenient overview of genres in Scholz 2008, 455-7.

[89] Collected in George 1992; see further Clancier 2009, 209-8.

mud dingir sag.gá KIMIN *ba-an ili ù* [*amēlí*]

Mud-dingir-sagga (Babylon),[90] the creator of god and [man;]

It is perhaps revealing that the syntax of the Sumerian is unconventional. George comments that 'Sumerian epithet, both in word order and choice of vocabulary, has the look of "back-translation" from the Akkadian.'[91] The text likely took shape in the twelfth century, and so was already a 'classic' by the time the Graeco-Babyloniacum was written. We cannot of course know that this line formed part of the tablet that had Greek script on: it need not be the case that the whole text was transliterated. Nonetheless, what the Graeco-Babyloniacum shows is an interest in the epithets used about Babylon among the local population, whether their primary affiliation was to Greek or to Babylonian culture. That Herodicus adapted this epithet for use in an epigram in which Babylon's status as a seat of learning is built up against Ptolemaic claims for Alexandria lends extra depth to the poem. It also provides a further indication that θεόπαις is to be understood as 'whose children are gods', or 'creator of gods' as in the Sumerian epithet.

4 Summary

We can begin by translating the poem, incorporating the results of this paper:

Flee from Greece, Aristarchean scholars, on the broad back of the sea,

[90] KIMIN means 'ditto'; Babylon itself was last mentioned at the start of the tablet: *ba-bi-lu šá ta-n-a-da-a-ti u ri-šá-a-ti šar-kaš*, 'Babylon, on which fame and jubilation are bestowed'.

[91] George 1992, 259.

You, greater cowards than a brown deer,

Wind-pipes in corners, monosyllables, concerned alone

With *sphin* and *sphoin*, with *min* and *nin*.

That's what you'll get, you brackish bunch. But as for Herodicus

May Greece remain for him, and Babylon, whose children are gods.

The suggestion of this paper is that Page was incorrect to question the appropriateness of the epithet for Babylon. Firstly, on Greek grounds: it is at least as plausible that a compound like θεόπαις is exocentric ('whose children are gods', 'mother of the god(s)')[92] as endocentric ('child of the gods'). This is based both on the facts of the use of θεόπαις as well as the semantics of other comparable compounds; it was important to establish this to counter the objection that an exocentric reading is *prima facie* implausible. Secondly, the interpretation 'child of the gods' rests primarily on the assumption that Babylon and Tyre cannot have the same epithet (as in Page's commentary) and on the assumed similarity between 'child of god' and 'gate of god', the folk etymology of the name 'Babylon' itself. Neither of these assumptions is compelling. Furthermore, there is a piece of much stronger evidence in favour of 'mother of the gods' when the poem is compared to contemporary literary texts in Akkadian - in particular the *TINTIR=Babylon* topographical text - which, in turn, can be set into a context of cultural exchange in Hellenistic Babylon by means of the Graeco-Babyloniaca. By attending to the nexus of contact between Greek and Near Eastern

[92] An anonymous reviewer reminds me that the Akkadian participle *bān* is masculine, and used of masculine deities. I use 'mother of the gods', therefore, only to underscore the link with Christian usage described above. The advantage Herodicus has in using a compound like θεόπαις is precisely that the adjective remains non-specific on this point.

literature, we not only awaken new resonances in our texts, but acquire additional ways of analysing and defending their meaning.[93]

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